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When GAMBLING is no longer fun.

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Identifying and getting help for senior problem gamblers.

Illinois Department on Aging
Illinois Department of Human Services

"It's just

You may never hear a senior say this about gambling. But that is exactly how some gamblers come to feel. What begins as fun, relaxing entertainment with friends becomes an emotionally and financially devastating addiction.

For most seniors, gambling is entertainment, pure and simple. It's a chance to escape with friends, get away from day to day stresses and have fun. Winning money is a bonus, not the primary objective. Most seniors who gamble continue to take care of their health and financial obligations.

> "I want my grandfather's legacy to be one of dignity and integrity, not playing the poker machines every week."

For a growing number of seniors, gambling is a losing enterprise. More time and attention are needed as the gambler attempts to win back what he/she has lost. If the losses continue, the gambler may sell possessions or property to cover expenses, or seek risky or high interest loans. Ultimately, the problem gambler avoids friends and family and lies about his/her activities. Anxiety, depression and financial stress can lead to declining health.

"I never thought gambling had risks
irst casino when I was in my late 60s with a
ven think it was any more harmful than BIN

not fun any

More widespread recognition of senior problem gambling means there are a number of resources to promote early detection, intervention and recovery. Call the Illinois Department on Aging's **Senior HelpLine** at **1-800-252-8966** (Voice and TTY) for information.

Seniors gamble for many reasons

Entertainment For most gamblers, the activity is fun and entertaining. It allows seniors to escape from worries for awhile.

High Disposable Income For some seniors, losing "a few dollars" gambling will not cause an unreasonable financial burden but repeated losses can quickly deplete large sums of money or create huge debts.

"The Big Win" Lower income seniors chase the possibility of winning big and being "set for life."

Opportunity/Availability Opportunities for gambling have increased dramatically in the past decade. Senior groups and living centers take trips to casinos. Lottery tickets are sold by convenience stores, gas stations and supermarkets. Even the Internet offers gambling action 24 hours a day from the convenience of home.

Changing Cultural Values Gambling was once seen as a "sinful," immoral activity. Now it is promoted as safe, fun, wholesome entertainment.

especially since I went to my group from my church...I didn't ..."

more."

Boredom or Loneliness Many seniors have too much time on their hands when they retire or lose a spouse. Gambling fills the empty hours.

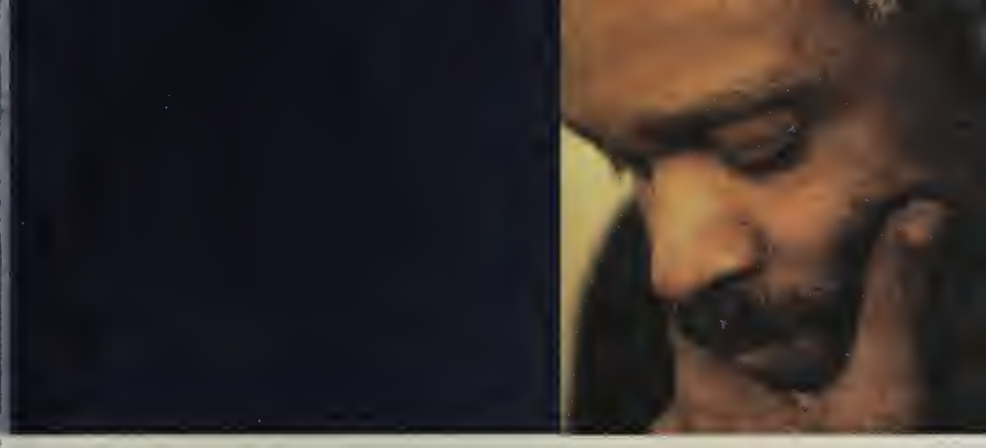
Casino Hospitality Unlike some forms of entertainment, casinos are very user-friendly. They are often staffed by people who are friendly, respectful and treat seniors as valued guests.

Peer Pressure The belief that "everyone else is doing it, what harm can it be" can overshadow reasoning and clear thinking.

Perceived as Safe Many seniors feel safe in the gambling environment, with guards on duty 24 hours a day, inside and out, and well-lit public areas.

Excitement The glitz and glamour of casino life can be exhilarating for those seniors who have never had that kind of wealth in their lives.

> "My mother was in an almost hypnotic state when she sat at a slot machine, and it was so sad. I've helped her learn new coping skills and to use her time more constructively."



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"A friend of mine used to take the bus each month and spend $25. Now she is going nearly every week and I think she is taking nearly $100 each time. Do you think she has a problem?"

Problem gambling may not be obvious

While people tend to think of casinos as the place where gambling takes place, there are other games of chance and activities that can become addictive.

- Baccarat
- Blackjack
- Bingo
- Cards
- Cock fights
- Commodities market
- Craps
- Dice
- Dogfights
- Dominos
- Greyhound racing
- Harness racing
- Horse racing
- Indian casinos
- Internet gambling
- Jai Alai
- Keno
- Lottery
- Off-track betting
- Numbers
- Options markets
- Betting on bowling, pool or games of skill
- Riverboat gambling
- Roulette
- Slot machines
- Stock market
- Sports betting
- Video poker

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Symptoms
of senior problem gambling

One or more of these signs does not reliably indicate a gambling problem, but the more signs that are present, the more likely a problem exists.

- Talking about wins, not losses
- Loss of interest in normal activities with friends and family
- Unaccounted for time
- Sudden inability to meet living expenses
- Sudden need for money or loans
- Gambling on credit
- Gambling as a means to cope
- Neglect of personal needs and obligations
- Gambling alone rather than with others
- Secrecy/lies about gambling
- Decline in health
- Missing possessions or liquidation of assets
- Personality and attitude changes

Rules
for responsible gambling

- Plan ahead, set a dollar limit
- Set a time limit
- Expect to lose
- Never gamble on credit
- Create balance in your life
- Avoid "chasing" lost money
- Don't gamble to deal with emotional or physical pain
- Get educated about the risks

help

for senior problem gamblers

Some problem gamblers will seek help for themselves, but in many cases, family members and friends must take the initiative. For more information about problem gambling or referral to gambling hotlines and professional help, call your local Area Agency on Aging or the Illinois Department on Aging's **Senior HelpLine** at **1-800-252-8966** (Voice and TTY).

Other Resources

Gam-Anon
718-352-1671
www.gam-anon.org

Gamblers Anonymous
312-346-1588
www.gamblersanonymous.org

Illinois Casino Gaming Association
1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537)

Illinois Council on Problem and Compulsive Gambling
1-800-GAMBLING (1-800-426-2546) or
847-296-2026
www.icpgambling.org

Illinois Institute for Addiction Recovery
1-800-522-3784
www.addictionrecov.org

National Council on Problem Gambling
1-800-522-4700, ext. 1
www.ncpgambling.org

The Outreach Foundation
1-866-LAST-BET (1-866-527-8238)
www.outreachfoundation.org

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Illinois Department on Aging

421 East Capitol Avenue, #100
Springfield, Illinois 62701-1789
www.state.il.us/aging

Senior HelpLine

1-800-252-8966

(Voice and TTY)

8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. M–F

1-800-279-0400

After hours, weekends and holidays

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